

GUIDING QUESTIONS ON GOAL SETTING AND ALLOCATION

SWMI Advisory Committee Meeting – September 28, 2010

GOAL SETTING

How should goals be set?

- Option 1: State-wide
 - o Goals can include elements such as no-backsliding, protection for existing uses (not necessarily existing volumes), restoration/improvement goals, or other?
- Option 2: Site-specific
 - o Should we also consider establishing more site-specific goals based on the unique characteristics of the site? These could be cold water fisheries, anadromous fisheries, current and potential water supply area, reservoirs.
 - Where should this be done? Everywhere, i.e. for every watershed or sub-basin?
 - Only for certain unique habitats, reaches?
 - Where and how should we discourage or encourage new or additional water withdrawals?
 - o How can a town/subwatershed go up or down a category/class? What are the metrics/criteria that can be measured? Should we include non-measurable/qualitative metrics such as dam removals, increased vegetative cover, improved/enhanced riparian habitat & buffers? What tools or best management practices would need to be implemented?
- Option 3: Some combination of the two

Process for establishing the more specialized goals.

How? Options include,

- o Only upon request from an agency or an outside entity
- o As per a pre-determined schedule

Who? Options include,

- o Through the Water Resources Commission
- o Staff from EEA or any of its agencies

ALLOCATION

- How do the 10 factors that need to be considered in the WMA fit into the above categories and goals?
- How should impervious cover be considered in making allocation decisions today?
- Are there other baseline requirements (go with the flow suggestions) that should be considered? Are they the same or different for each category?

Water Management Act – Excerpts to Facilitate Discussion on Allocation

...In adopting regulations establishing criteria and standards for obtaining permits, the department shall assure, at a minimum, that the following factors are considered:—

- (1) The impact of the proposed withdrawal on other water sources which are hydrologically interconnected with the water source from which the withdrawal is to be made;*
- (2) The anticipated times of year when withdrawals will be made;*
- (3) The water available within the safe yield of the water source from which the withdrawal is to be made;*
- (4) Reasonable protection of water uses, land values, investments and enterprises that are dependent on previously allowable withdrawals;*
- (5) The use to be made of the water proposed to be withdrawn and other existing, presently permitted or projected uses of the water source from which the withdrawal is to be made;*
- (6) Any water resources management plan for any city or town in which the affected water source is located;*
- (7) Any state water resources management plan adopted by the commission;*
- (8) Reasonable conservation practices and measures, consistent with efficient utilization of the water;*
- (9) Reasonable protection of public drinking water supplies, water quality, wastewater treatment capacity, waste assimilation capacity, groundwater recharge areas, navigation, hydropower resources, water-based recreation, wetland habitat, fish and wildlife, agriculture, and flood plains; and*
- (10) Reasonable economic development and the creation of jobs in the commonwealth.*

1 This summary is offered for discussion purposes only and does not necessarily represent current statute, regulation, or policy positions of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts unless specifically acknowledged. This summary is not to be cited as a reference. Its purpose is to foster open and broad discussion of the issues of sustainable water management as well as help assure public awareness of the discussions.

EXCERPTS OF PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS ON GOAL SETTING

Discussion at July 27 meeting:

Viable goals: Goals should be set with clear understanding of implementation mechanisms, defining scale and measurement of net benefit

Goal - No Back-sliding

- As a policy, is this a viable policy?
- Discussion included the following points:
 - Too low a target, improvement/restoration should be a goal
 - Would trade offs be possible: i.e. let one slip a little to pursue significant improvement elsewhere? As a simple mathematical exercise, it might limit the ability to make a worthwhile change in one for a small impact in another
 - In the case of trading, seek net benefit
 - Would the policy be applied within any sublevels of Category 5?
 - Could we allow trading?
 - Is this realistic given the fact that land use is not under our control?
 - What are the implications to communities?
- How would “backsliding be measured” – a drop in category?
 - At what scale? Statewide, Basin, or Sub-basin
 - Do the water quality standards for each basin offer guidance in the methodology, providing a starting point for each basin?

What other goals may be a possibility?

- Are there resource-specific goals that may be better measured at a statewide scale than goals?
- Within the concept of no back-sliding, are there separate causes for impairment that should be considered in managing restoration?

Discussion at September 1 meeting:

- Goals: restoring, maintaining, do not drop below a particular level.
- Impervious cover does remain an important issue and needs to remain a consideration among the goals. Changes to impervious surfaces can impact ecosystem health.
- Though the USGS regression model measures impact, it cannot be automatically assumed that reversing actions will automatically bring results. And there may be differences in matters of scale in that the efforts to restore may require efforts greater than what made the original impact, for example a 3:1 or 4:1 removal of impervious surface.
- The USGS regression model may indicate response to a couple of key factors, specifically impervious surface and withdrawals, but there must be a holistic approach to restoration, and a patient approach. Restoration will be a long term process.

- There is a lot to learn from the water quality standards. The standards were initially established for regulating discharges, but they deal in depth both with scale and differing conditions. They also provide guidance regarding issues such as no backsliding, offering more of a “no, but” strategy.

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